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ABSTRACT

Results of a study of the costs of examinations in further higher education (FHE) in England and Wales are presented, based on a survey of 12 FHE institutions, 6 local education authorities (LEAs), and a number of examining bodies. After a brief review of the system of assessment in England and Wales, attention is directed to the range of fees paid by examining boards to examiners and moderators, and the fees they charge to candidates. Examples are provided of costs and fees associated with examinations. LEA policies and systems associated with examinations are also examined. Conclusions include: generally, an increasing number of students undertake some form of assessment (e.g., skills tests, continuous assessment, achievement records); examining bodies are willing to fill any gap in a student's education with some recognized certificate of achievement; the system of assessment in further and higher education is complex, competitive, expensive, and uncoordinated; colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to advise students and to match the available assessment opportunities to their particular needs; and the costs of assessment appear to be rising more than the rate of inflation. (SW)

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An Occasional Paper

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THE COST OF ASSESSING

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FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

THE COST OF ASSESSING

Jean F. Rossiter

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

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FOREWORD

i) The attached report by Jean F. Rossiter* was commissioned by the FEU. It comprises a limited snapshot surveying the costs of examinations in FHE, as part of the aim was to produce data for the MSC/DES Review of Vocational Qualifications Group before it completed its task.

ii) The report exposes deficiencies that must concern LEAs and colleges, regarding the extent to which this substantial area of expenditure is monitored locally. The complexity of examining, testing and certification is increasing; costs are rising and they will become increasingly difficult to analyse and compare. Internal assessment in particular is perceived as being increasingly expensive especially in staff time. What controls and analyses exist in the colleges and polytechnics are acknowledged as crude and simplistic, but the impression is that institutions are increasingly in deficit in this area. Not all LEAs take account of this, and in some cases the authority's fee policy exacerbates the institutional debt.

iii) Some 12 FHE institutions, 6 LEAs and a range of examining bodies were surveyed. Following a brief review in Section II of the system of assessment in England and Wales, subsequent sections analyse costs and perceptions. Section III illustrates the range of fees paid by the examining boards to their examiners and moderators and the fees they charge to candidates. Section IV gives examples of costs and fees associated with examinations as perceived in the colleges and polytechnics. Section V analyses LEA policies and systems associated with examinations. Each of these sections also reports the comments and suggestions received from the respondents, and Jean Rossiter adds to these a brief commentary of her own. The author acknowledges the smallness of the sample, but she feels justified in formulating some general conclusions. These will be found in the summary, Section VI.

iv) From these conclusions emerge certain trends. The decline of our teenage population is not bringing about a related decline in post-16 examinations; indeed, a new and wider range of learner-clients seeking credentials is tending generally to increase the number and range of assessments and examinations. This is bound to have implications for those who manage and organise the curriculum.

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* Former Assistant Director, North East London Polytechnic

v) The report identifies a not unexpected dilemma: the acknowledged entrepreneurship of the examining bodies in responding to client needs does not relate well to the suggestions of the LEAs and their institutions to rationalise and limit the range of assessment and examinations on offer. Modularisation, open learning, profiles, flexible examination times, etc., whilst contributing to greater responsiveness and learner-autonomy, are generally seen as factors inevitably increasing the costs and complexity of the examining and assessment systems. This dilemma will probably become acute if the possibility of qualifications via work-based learning is to increase — via YTS(2), the accreditation of experiential learning, and other initiatives. This is very much part of the agenda of the Review of Vocational Qualifications Group, and a copy of the draft report was sent to its Secretariat in January 1986, prior to publication by the FEU.

vi) Jean Rossiter concludes her report by suggesting that more work needs to be done in investigating such issues as why apparently similar examinations vary so much in candidates' fees; whether assessment should be defined and costed as an integral part of the learning process; and whether employers and learners get what they want from the examination system. The FEU will be exploring some of these and other issues raised in the report, some will no doubt be dealt with by any new national body for vocational qualifications. One issue not explored in this project is who really pays for the army of professional volunteers that man the various committees and working parties of examining bodies. This applies to schools as well as FHE, but it is perhaps a symbiotic relationship that would not survive too much analysis.

vii) In the meantime, those who participated in the survey generally acknowledged the valued gained by being forced to consider such issues.

JACK MANSELL
Chief Officer
Further Education Unit

SECTION I

INTRODUCTION

Background

1. Almost all students in further and higher education are assessed in some way or other. Most of this assessment is undertaken by the colleges for, or on behalf of, a number of different examining and validating bodies whose aims are to establish nationally-recognised standards of achievement acceptable to the educational system — for those students who want to continue within it — and to employers. Such assessment also provides a goal and a sense of achievement for students themselves: a rationale which for many educationists would by itself justify the cost and effort involved.

2. The educational system is, however, constantly subjected to pressures to change, to meet what are perceived to be the different needs of the society it serves. So too is the examination system. In fact it is often a change in the latter that provides the stimulus for change in the educational system. Sometimes indeed it it difficult to know which is master and which servant. Nevertheless, the increasing pace of change in assessment over recent years has given cause for some concern, not least about the new and additional demands that seem to be being made on the institutions carrying it out, and it is this concern, voiced by institutions and authorities alike, that led to this project.

The Survey

3. Comparatively little is recorded about what the costs of assessment cover, how much they might be and who pays them. It was hoped that this survey would begin to identify the various elements of cost involved, give some idea of their order of magnitude and indicate how they are met. At the same time some attempt was to be made to elucidate more clearly any particular trends or points of concern and to note any suggestions that might be made to improve the system.

4. One of the main limitations on the outcome of the survey has been the time in which it has had to be prepared. With such an open-ended project a major problem has been to restrict it to areas of enquiry for which answers would be reasonably readily available. It is very much to the credit of those interviewed, or from whom information was sought

in other ways, that they accepted the enquiry without question and went out of their way to provide as much detailed information as they could — and this with almost no prior notice. Moreover, not only were the investigations necessarily brief in order to complete them in the time allotted but they have been carried out at the peak of the assessment period and at a time when many appropriate staff were most difficult to pin down. Nevertheless, there has been a marked willingness to co-operate on all sides and if what results is far from being a scientific survey it does present a picture that indicates, perhaps, where further enquiry could be made if indeed it is thought desirable to do so.

Methods Used

5. Information has been obtained from published reports, regulations and policy statements and from interviewing relevant staff in examining and validating bodies, educational institutions and local education authorities. In all, eleven examining bodies, or validating organisations, ten institutions and five authorities have provided information. The examining bodies were selected in order to cover a wide range of work done in the colleges, and thus represent examinations from pre-GCE 'O' level to postgraduate and professional awards, be they externally-controlled or internally-assessed. The colleges were chosen to ensure a reasonable representation of size, level and nature of work and include five colleges of further education, two colleges of higher education and three polytechnics. Finally, the five local education authorities which responded are representative of inner city areas as well as the shire counties.

Report of the Survey

6. The structure of the report follows the pattern of the initial enquiry, as described in the Project Information Bulletin (see Appendix). It identifies the costs of assessment as they are seen by the examining bodies, the colleges and the local education authorities. In each case any areas of special concern, trends or developments are noted and a commentary is made on the impressions gained as a result of the enquiry. These separate viewpoints are then integrated in a summary of general conclusions to be drawn from it, which also suggests some areas that might be worthy of further consideration. It is not the purpose of this report to make recommendations: it may, however, provoke some further questioning.

Acknowledgements

7. Warm thanks are extended to all those who have taken part in this survey, often at very short notice. Their willingness to co-operate and to provide the necessary information has been greatly appreciated. If they are not mentioned by name it is to preserve the confidentiality they sought or were promised.

8. While every effort has been taken to make this survey accurate, it has not been possible to check the report with those who have participated in it. Some errors of reporting, ommission or interpretation may therefore exist and, where they do, apologies are extended to the organisations concerned. Unless otherwise stated, any views expressed are those of the writer.

SECTION II

THE ASSESSMENT SYSTEM IN ENGLAND AND WALES

Responsibility for Assessment

9. For the purposes of this survey an examining body is an organisation, external to an educational institution, whose certificate, diploma or degree is awarded to students who are successful in whatever form of assessment has been determined by that body as appropriate for its award. It is the examining body that agrees the criteria for success. This definition includes the widely-recognised national examining bodies such as the GCE Boards, RSA, City and Guilds of London Institute and Pitmans as well as a large number of professional bodies, most of whom are probably more directly concerned with assessment than they are with the educational process that may lead up to it. It also includes the two main validating bodies in further and higher education — BTEC and CNAA — whose aim is to achieve and maintain standards through the approval of courses and whose involvement with assessment is a consequence of this, rather than any direct control of assessment as such.

10. Because of their diversity and the lack of time available to deal with them, those assessments leading to awards given by the educational institutions themselves, where they are the sole arbiter of both the education provided and the way that it is assessed, are not covered. The report also excludes the arrangements made by examining bodies in this country for assessments held overseas.

11. There are two broad systems of assessment operating in colleges in England and Wales — the 'external system' where the regulations, content, coverage, form, timing and standard of assessment are all laid down by the examining body; and the 'internal system' where the colleges themselves, through the design of the course of study offered, determine the form, nature, timing and standard of assessment, subject only to some form of monitoring by the validating body.

12. Although there are clearly variations in cost between the many examining bodies involved, the biggest cost difference lies between the two systems. In the 'external system' the brunt of the expenditure lies with the examining body, for here the college acts more as an agent, registering students for particular examinations, collecting their fees and passing them on, making the physical arrangements for the

assessments and forwarding scripts etc. for marking, always in accordance with the regulations and timetable laid down by the examining body. With the 'internal system' the college itself bears most of the expenditure in fulfilling the assessment requirements that it has proposed for the approved course.

13. It is significant that the examination fee charged to students in the external system is replaced in the internal system by a registration fee, which again the colleges collect and pass on to the validating body. Whereas, broadly speaking, the examination fee is intended to cover the total costs of the examining body in offering the examinations, the registration fee is more closely linked to the cost of course validation, in which assessment may play a relatively minor part, and certification. In most cases, however, the fees paid by students form the main income of the examining or validating body.

The External Examining Process

14. The procedure adopted by the examining bodies in the external system is, with certain notable variations, broadly the same. The college is designated as a local examination centre with its own examinations secretary, who is responsible to the examining body for registering students, collecting their examination fees, finding appropriate accommodation for the examinations, arranging invigilation, collecting scripts and forwarding them to the examiners. The examining body draws up syllabus specifications to which the form and timing of assessment is related, lays down the regulations to be followed, sets and/or moderates examination papers, fixes the timetable on a national basis, and issues the examination requirements and papers to the colleges. It ensures that completed scripts are forwarded to examiners, arranges for the moderation of scripts and standardisation of marking sheets and eventually issues the appropriate certificate, or statement of award or performance, which is usually forwarded to the individual student through the college.

15. While this is the broad pattern adopted by most examining bodies in the external system, there are some significant variations from it. These are worth noting because they have some effect on the costs incurred by the examining bodies and are often therefore reflected in the fees charged to students.

16. Almost invariably, colleges in the public sector are accepted as examination centres without any formal process of approval or charge. Some examining bodies, e.g. the GCE Boards, the Institute of Bankers and the Engineering Council, make additional centres available for

those students who have not studied at a particular centre. Colleges themselves are expected to meet all the costs of running the centres although the Engineering Council is prepared to pay certain charges that are made on it for accommodation and invigilation. On the other hand Pitmans imposes on each centre a small registration fee which is renewable for each four-year period.

17. Most examining boards have no contact with individual students, leaving this entirely to the local centres. An exception to this, however, is the Engineering Council which not only requires each student to register and pay fees direct but also requires them to be individually assessed, for a fee, on their suitability to register for the examinations. Students may also apply direct to the Institute of Bankers.

18. The extent to which examining bodies are concerned about the institutions offering their examinations, or the courses that lead to them, also varies. Many of them are satisfied with drawing up syllabus specifications but some, e.g. the Hotel Catering and Institutional Management Association (HCIMA), need to know that the proposed structure and staffing for the course are acceptable, and may visit the college for this purpose. The National Nursery Examination Board also charges a validation fee for new courses but no charge is made for revalidation, which usually takes place every three years. Pitmans is involved with the approval of its Retail Distribution courses.

19. Whereas most boards offer an annual diet of examinations and publish a national timetable which all centres then have to follow, Pitmans will arrange examinations on demand throughout the year provided adequate notice is given by the centre. To enable this system to work all Pitmans' examination papers have to be collected after the examinations and returned; for other examining bodies, the exam papers may be generally retained by the students, (multiple-choice question papers are sometimes an exception). Other examining bodies, while not offering examinations on demand, have, in response to increased demand, arranged additional series of examinations during the year.

20. Another variation lies in the extent to which examining bodies permit 'locally-set' or Mode 3 type examinations, where the teachers themselves design, set and mark the assessments carried out by their students. Special arrangements can be made for these, notably by AEB and the City and Guilds of London Institute. This may be an extra charge to the college.

21. Finally, although few boards have direct contact with students, some make provision for 'appeal' or 'enquiry' once the results have been made known. This is true, for example, of the HCIMA and the RSA, where a special charge is made for any particular investigation that is undertaken. In other cases, the appeals procedure is not formalised and rarely publicised.

The Internal Examining Process

22. Two validating bodies, BTEC and the CNAA, are essentially responsible for the 'internal system'. While they both share the objective of giving staff and students as much freedom as possible over education, they achieve this in different ways and their involvement in assessment also varies.

23. The CNAA has perhaps least direct involvement. College proposals for assessment in a particular course are considered in relation to its aims and objectives and once approved by the CNAA (which is normally by committee scrutiny and visitation) it is the staff's responsibility to see that the assessment is properly carried out. A 'watching brief' on behalf of the CNAA is undertaken by external examiners who, though appointed and paid for by the colleges, have to be approved by, and report to, the CNAA. It is thus through the initial approval of the course and the methods of assessment proposed for it, through the approval of external examiners, and through the cognisance given to their reports, that the CNAA is involved in assessment.

24. Although BTEC operates a similar system of flexibility (within, perhaps, rather more specific guidelines) its involvement in assessment is slightly more direct in that control over standards is maintained through the approval of centres, the validation of particular programmes of study and the moderation of programmes and students' performance. It is in the last of these that BTEC differs from the CNAA, for all the costs of moderation, including the selection and appointment of moderators, are undertaken direct by BTEC.

25. All arrangements for assessment of BTEC and CNAA courses are carried out by the staff in the colleges. Course work is monitored and recorded, log books scrutinised, reports criticised, and examinations set and held by the staff teaching on the course. All marking is done by those staff and it is the college's responsibility to arrange the assessment boards (on which the CNAA external examiners and the BTEC moderators sit) which agree the students' pass list and forward it to the appropriate validating body. These lists are eventually confirmed; the results are conveyed to the students by the college and both CNAA and BTEC issue — again to the college — the students' certificate (CNAA) or notification of performance or record of success (BTEC). As with most of the examining bodies in the external examining system, neither CNAA nor BTEC deals direct with individual students.

26. A further difference between the internal and external systems lies in the college's responsibility to set up an assessment board for each CNAA and BTEC course and also, for the former, to introduce a formal student appeal system. As will be seen in a later section this, in itself, is a not inconsiderable cost element for the colleges.

27. In brief, therefore, the cost of assessment incurred by the CNAA lies in the registration of the student, the time spent on approving external examiners and the preparation and issue of award certificates. For BTEC must be added the selection and payment of moderators.

SECTION III

COSTS — THE EXAMINING BOARDS' VIEW

Identifiable Costs

28. In the external system the costs incurred by the examining bodies generally include:

— a network of advisory committees to determine examinations policy, design assessment schemes, draw up subject specifications and examinations/tests;

— where undertaken, approval of centres;

— selection, appointment and payment of chief examiners, examiners and/or moderators;

— meetings of examiners and/or moderators;

— printing of entry forms, examination timetables, papers, results lists and award documentation;

— provision of examination stationery;

— postage;

— maintenance of student records;

— staff and administrative overheads, e.g. salaries, buildings;

— computer time and equipment.

29. The costs incurred by the two bodies involved in the internal system — BTEC and CNAA — are less easy to identify since the major part of their expenditure lies in course validation and it is this that primarily determines their adminstrative organisation and fees structure. (Even the recent cost analysis carried out by CNAA fails to show up any costs attributable solely to the assessment of students). Nevertheless, in this respect each of them has to bear the cost of:

— an appropriate committee structure;

— student registration and records;

— approval of external examiners or the appointment and payment of moderators;

— preparation and printing of pass lists and award documentation;

— postage;

— staff, and a proportion of adminstrative overheads.

Fees Policy

30. Most of the examining bodies have stated that the fees charged for their examinations, or for registration — their main income — were determined by their forseeable operating costs. None was prepared to admit to adopting a profit-making strategy although several acknowledged that the market forces of supply and demand featured in their pricing policies. Many of them recognised the need to ensure resources for research and development.

31. Unfortunately, except in isolated cases, it is not possible to identify in the annual statements of account prepared by these bodies the individual cost of each of the above items of expenditure. The City and Guilds of London Institute (1983/84), for example, refers collectively to 'Examining and Committee costs — £1,343,700' in a total expenditure of £9,282,500, while for BTEC (1983/84) the cost of moderators at £1,035,951 is the second largest item of expenditure in a total budget of almost £6m. The Institute of Bankers (1984/85) gives a more detailed breakdown, where out of a total examination expenditure of £245,602 about two-thirds goes on fees for examiners but the total is itself only a very small part of the Institute's annual budget of more than £3m. This includes staff and other costs, such as computers and postage, that all contribute to the operation of examinations, but are not separately attributable to them. In any event, without an accompanying explanation of the number, type and location of students involved, and a more detailed understanding of how each body operates, the figures alone have relatively little meaning.

32. The one item of expenditure which does feature in all but the CNAA is what each Board pays to its examiners and/or moderators. Some examples of this can therefore be given but the weight accorded to each must be tempered by the difference that inevitably exists between what each body expects of its examiners and/or moderators and the basis on which they are paid. Some are paid per examination, others per paper or per subject, and some of these payments are then varied to reflect the number of candidates involved. These examples can at best be used only to indicate an order of magnitude.

33. In most cases the main recipients of these fees are teachers themselves, who are selected and appointed in their individual personal capacity for this additional work.

Some Examples of Typical Fees Paid by Examining Bodies

34. Since each examination is different in the demands it makes on examiners, and within each Board subjects and levels are treated differently, it is not feasible to draw comparisons from the examples

given. Wherever possible, however, terminology has been standardised.

Board A	
Chief Examiner	Basic Fee £223 + setting fee of £110 per subject
Marking Fee	68p — 83p per script
Moderator	£42 — £61 per subject (1985/86)
Board B	
Chief Examiner	£600 per examination (including setting fee)
Marking Fee	£2 per script
Moderator	£110 per paper (1985/86)
Board C	
Setting Fee	£50 per paper
Marking Fee	65p per script (1984/85)
Board D	
Chief Examiner	Minimum £110 setting fee + 60p for each script submitted
Marking Fee	£2.15p per script
Moderator	£45 per annum + £45 per paper + 25p per candidate (1984/85)
Board E	
Setting Fee	£88 or £94 according to level
Marking Fee	£1.15 or £1.45 per script according to level
Moderating Fee	£98 per subject (1984/85)
Board F	
Setting Fee	£107 per paper/subject
Marking Fee	28p — 52p per script (1985/86)
Board G	
Setting Fee	£40 — £112 per paper/subject depending on level
Marking Fee	40p — 80p per script depending on level (1984/85)

Board H

Moderator	£98 p.a. + £53 for second college visit + £68 for additional centre (1985/86)

Candidates' Fees

35. Expenditure on examinations is met largely, if not wholly, from the fees charged to students and here, once more, there is considerable variation in the basis on which they are calculated, as well as in the amount charged. Again it is possible to quote only a number of typical examples so as to indicate an order of magnitude; terminology has been standardised wherever possible.

Board A

Initial Fee	£4.25 per candidate
Level 1	£5.75 per subject
Level 2	£11 per subject (1985/86)

Board B

Any level	£6.50 per subject (1985/86)

Board C

Level 1	£12
Level 2	£17
Level 3	£23 (1984/85)

Board D

Initial Fee	£17 per candidate
1 subject	£30
2 subjects	£40
3 subjects	£50
4 subjects	£55
5 subjects	£60
6 subjects	£65 (1985/86)

Board E

Level 1 or 2	£13.50 per subject (1984/85)

Board F

All subjects and levels	£2.39 + VAT (1985/86)

Board G

Level 1	£4.25 per subject
Level 2	£5.60 per subject
Level 3	£6.40 per subject (1984/85)

Board H

Initial Fee	Level 1 — £30 per candidate Level 2 — £38.50 per candidate Level 3 — £43 per candidate (1985/86)

Observations Made by Examining Bodies

36. Most boards commented that, largely due to previous changes in the birth rate, the number of candidates taking their examinations 'peaked' over the period 1980-82, but that the subsequent fall was not as great as had been expected. This 'levelling off' was thought to be due to the introduction of new subjects, levels and types of assessment, all of which had helped to slow down the rate of decline. None of them seemed to be experiencing any significant difficulties other than rising costs, e.g. postage, which, in most cases, were passed on to candidates through an annual review of fees. They had no difficulty in obtaining examiners and/or moderators and could often do so without the need for national advertisement. Many of them favoured an extension of computerisation, especially for student records.

Commentary on the Examining Boards' Contribution

37. The boards collectively give the impression of an expanding industry, ready and eager to fill any gaps that changes in the educational system might reveal. This applies particularly at the lower end of the scale where there could be some duplication, e.g. RSA, Pitmans and the London Chamber of Commerce on secretarial and commercial examinations, and between the GCE Boards, City and Guilds and BTEC where emphasis is growing on the assessment of skills. It is difficult to judge the weight given in this expansion to commercial or educational motives, but it would seem that, if sufficient students were to seek assessment at any time or stage in their development, there is likely to be an examining body with a national reputation ready to introduce or arrange it. The system is eminently flexible. The proliferation of examinations and their expansion into areas not previously subject to assessment, e.g. skills tests, together with a more difficult employment market combine to place students under greater pressure to seek some form of assessment: they all want that 'bit of paper' which they believe a prospective employer will demand from them.

38. The extent to which the boards create or increase that pressure or, as they themselves seem to suggest, merely respond to it, is similarly

not easy to judge. But there can be little doubt that assessment is an expanding industry, offering new products to a diversified clientele faster than any real decline in the old. Whether it would be in the students' interest for there to be some measure of rationalisation between competing boards is currently a matter for debate by the Review of Vocational Qualifications*. This would require a greater willingness to co-operate on the part of the boards, with possibly more selective entry and greater opportunities for credits and exemptions. It would need a more informed counselling service for students so that they are directed into the most appropriate examinations, and discouraged from taking out 'insurance' by doing more examinations than are really necessary. At the moment the author sees little evidence of any of these measures making much progress.

* *The report of the Working Group for the Review of Vocational Qualifications was published in May 1986. A main recommendation is to set up a National Council for Vocational Qualifications, and the cost-effectiveness of any new system of qualifications is expected to be a significant item on its agenda.*

SECTION IV

COSTS — THE INSTITUTIONS' VIEW

The Nature and Accounting of Costs

39. Most institutions of further and higher education are involved simultaneously with both the external and internal assessment systems, although it would appear that the more the advanced work that is done, the higher the proportion of internal assessment carried out. As has been shown, in the external system the college acts essentially as an agent for the examining body and, despite the fact that the college inevitably has some residual costs, e.g. staff and postage, the fees charged are basically those imposed by, and collected on behalf of, the examinations boards. In the internal system the institution itself is directly responsible for a wider range of costs — yet here no examination fee is imposed: merely a registration fee payable by the students when they first enrol on the course, and transferred in its entirety to the validating body. The fee is the same irrespective of the incidence and type of assessment in the course followed.

40. How then are these costs of assessment, which the colleges have to pay, accounted for in their annual budgets? This is done in several ways, depending on the nature of the cost and the policy of the institution or the authority concerned. Many costs are absorbed in the institution's total estimate for that item and are not separately identified in relation only to assessment. This would apply to postage, for example, and sometimes also for printing and stationery. The costs of setting papers, invigilating and marking scripts are all accepted as normal academic staff duties and are covered by the usual salary estimates. Similarly, many reprographic costs and the materials used during assessment are also absorbed in the normal departmental allocations. Nevertheless, although many of these costs are not usually accounted for separately, when asked to do so several institutions have made a special effort to estimate what they are and the costs outlined later in this section reflect their endeavours.

41. A few institutions have in fact established a separate budget for examinations, and where this is done the costs involved are more easily calculated. Even so, whether accounted for separately or absorbed in the normal institutional annual budget, the costs of assessment borne by the colleges have, for the most part, to be met from their normal

funding from student fees, local authority and central support. Since, in many cases, the costs cannot be accurately estimated, this means virement between different heads of the estimates with the inevitable blurring of the expenditure actually spent on assessment.

42. Two devices have, however, been adopted by some colleges in order to ease, albeit marginally, the burden of examinations costs on their budgets. The first, which is the more widespread, is to add a local administration fee to the examination fee charged to each student, the local fee being retained as income for the college. Few examining bodies object to this although some wish to approve the amount charged.

43. The second method of meeting some assessment costs, adopted with mixed results by a few institutions, is to ask students to supply self-addressed stamped envelopes thus easing the costs of postage and administration. This seems to work successfully only where it is made a formal requirement to be met before a student can be enrolled for an examination: any lesser sanction results in a half-hearted system that can prove to be more costly than no system at all. With these two exceptions the income received from students for examination fees is balanced by the payments made by the institution on their behalf to the examining bodies.

44. The above methods help even less in the internal system. Here the only easing of the cost burden is effected by the growing practice of making a charge to students where they are required to resit an examination but are not expected to attend college (and therefore pay a tuition fee) before doing so.

45. Normally, therefore, the full cost of assessment rarely shows up in an institution's budget. Income from examination fees and payments to examining bodies is expected to balance and all other costs are 'hidden'. One major exception to this exists in the internal system, where payments to external examiners for CNAA courses form a significant item in the estimates, unmatched by a comparable item of income. This too is regarded as one of the normal operating costs of the institution but because of its size and nature it can usually be identified.

46. Generally speaking, therefore, the only budget reference to examinations, for those colleges wholly concerned with the external system, is to the income from examination fees matched by a similar transfer of those fees to the examining bodies. For some of these colleges, however, a problem is arising where, because of the local authority's policy of waiving fees for certain categories of students, these two items no longer balance. The shortfall has to be met from other heads in the estimates or by additional grant from an understanding local authority.

47. Where colleges are also involved in work for BTEC and CNAA they inevitably have costs to bear, most of which are absorbed in other

budget heads, but some of which, e.g. external examiners' fees and expenses, are a significant item of expenditure to be met from normal annual funding.

Examples of Costs and Fees

48. The following are examples of the various costs incurred where an institution has been able to identify and quantify them. In all cases these are estimates. Once again, without detailed information on the number and range of examination candidates for each college, these figures indicate only an order of magnitude, and the variation that exists.

FE College A

Accommodation	£350 p.a.
Invigilation	£3,600 p.a.(£2.72 per hour)
Postage	£400 p.a.
Printing/ reprographics	£5
Stationery	£90 for BTEC, rest supplied by boards
Staff	£8,000
Administrative fee charged	GCE — £1.50 per student per board Other — £1 per student per board

FE College B

Accommodation	None hired
Invigilation	Done by teaching staff at no extra cost
Postage	Absorbed in departmental and college costs
Printing/ reprographics	Absorbed in departmental and college costs
Stationery	Absorbed
Staff	£23,000 p.a.

Local fee charged for City and Guilds and GCE examination.

FE College C

Accommodation	None hired
Invigilation	Mostly done by teaching staff; £900 p.a. paid centrally
Postage	£265
Printing/ reprographics	£350 p.a. BTEC printing absorbed by departments
Stationery	£500 p.a.centrally: balance provided by departments
Staff	£20,000 p.a.

Students pay college registration fee of £8.10 which includes a small component towards examination costs and a local examination fee of 75p per student per board.

FE College D

Accommodation	Little required — £50
Invigilation	£100 p.a. (£3.50 per hour)
Postage	Cannot be separately identified but increasing
Printing/ reprographics	Nil
Stationery	Provided by examining bodies
Staff	£10,000 p.a.

Local fee — £1.20 per paper per student.

FE College E

Accommodation	Nil
Invigilation	Done by teaching staff
Postage	£500 + students' own stamped addressed envelopes
Printing/ reprographics	Considerable: prints own entry form for each student
Stationery	Mostly provided by examining bodies
Staff	£23,000 p.a.
Moderators and other costs	£1,500 — £2,000

College of HE F

Accommodation	Occasionally hires local halls
Invigilation	Mostly by teaching staff; if necessary, pays £3.50 per hour
Postage	Absorbed in total college budget
Printing/reprographics	Absorbed
Stationery	Absorbed
Staff	Impossible to quantify
External Examiners	Cost increasing because of development work and expenses

Local administrative fee — £1.20 per written paper and £1.90 per practical examination.

College of HE G

Accommodation	£2,400 p.a.
Invigilation	£6,500 p.a. (£2.70 per hr) for examination assistants
Postage	Absorbed in college budget
Printing/reprographics	£19,000
Stationery	£5,500
Staff	£70,000
External examiners	£17,000 fees; £4,000 expenses

Local administrative fee of £3.50 — £5 charged as part of tuition fee for a few courses.

Polytechnic H

Accommodation	Up to £500
Invigilation	Done by teaching staff
Postage	£2,300 for CNAA/BTEC certificates alone
Printing/reprographics	Absorbed in departmental budgets
Stationery	£4,800
Staff	£57,000
External examiners	£27,565 fees; £8,745 expenses
Assessment Boards and appeals	Staff costs and printing high but not identifiable

Polytechnic I	
Accommodation	£1,150
Invigilation	Approx. 4,900 hrs of teaching staff time: extra paid at £4.10 per hour
Postage	Absorbed in polytechnic total
Printing/ reprographics	£3,710
Stationery	£5,950
Staff	Spread over faculties: not possible to identify
External examiners	£30,478 fees; £14,777 expenses
Assessment boards and appeals	Labour intensive and costly; extensive printing costs mainly absorbed by departments
Polytechnic J	
Accommodation	£500; likely to increase
Invigilation	Mostly by academic staff (2000 hrs) + £2,800 for professional examinations
Postage	Absorbed in polytechnic total
Printing/ reprographics	£650
Stationery	£5,000
Staff	£21,000 centrally, plus some faculty support
External examiners	£41,000 fees; £9,000 expenses
Assessment boards and appeals	Considerable costs but not identifiable

Observations Made By Institutions

49. The comments made by the institutions varied tremendously, and not all of those recorded here were made by each one of the colleges included in the survey. Indeed there were significant differences between institutions, largely related to the level of work done and therefore the type and number of candidates involved. Put briefly, the problems of the colleges of FE were often very different from those of the polytechnics, with the colleges of HE frequently experiencing some of those encountered by both.

50. Several colleges referred to the fact that, despite the fall in the birth rate, there was not a comparable falling off in student numbers, and certainly not in examination entries. The reasons for this were given as the number of older students who were returning to further and higher education in mid-career, or of those who were staying in the educational system longer than they might previously have done.

51. The increase in the number of students is accompanied by an increase in the number of examinations available to them, especially in the lower ability levels where skills tests, access and pre-vocational courses, together with courses in previously non-examinable areas, e.g. recreation and leisure, has exacerbated the pressures of the employment market for recognised accreditation. Also, there is an increase in assessment arising from the educational desirability of hitherto largely untested students taking some form of assessment early on into further education, as a stepping-stone or diagnosis for progress. On some mixed-economy courses (diversified programmes with deferred options) there is also an element of doubling-up on examinations. It is not difficult to conclude that more (and different) students are now involved in some form of assessment than ever before.

52. The fact that this expansion is bringing new types of students into the assessment ambit, however, creates one of the growing financial problems for the colleges. As has been seen, they are normally expected to balance the input of examination fees from the students with the output of examination fees paid to the examining bodies. Now, however, the colleges are increasingly having to face a deficit in this account, resulting from the remission of fees for students up to the age of 18 (and in some cases 19) and for those to whom concessionary rates are applied, e.g. the unemployed and others in receipt of social benefits, and in a few cases those who are retired. Where this deficit occurs — and it can be quite substantial — it has to be made up directly by the LEA or indirectly through virement from other heads of estimates.

53. One London college of FE estimated that out of a total examinations expenditure of about £70,000 almost half, £32,000, now comes from 'Governors' Allowances' thus depriving those other areas, e.g. equipment and consumables, to which the latter would have been wholly devoted. In another college the deficit was £20,000. Several institutions commented on the growing number of students whose fees were remitted but, as long as this was in line with authority policy, they expected the authority and not the college to bear the consequences.

54. It is, however, a matter of growing concern, particularly in the FE colleges. Many institutions are finding that the normal practice of 'incremental budgeting', designed to take into account the effect of inflation, fail to reflect the totally different and more expensive examinations climate in which they are now operating. Many of the colleges surveyed thought that the authorities seriously underestimated

the expenditure to which they, the colleges, were committed by the expanded system of assessment and examinations they were now expected to follow.

55. These factors appear to have placed a cost burden on the colleges which some are finding hard to bear. The increased cost of assessment, and the drift into more externally-controlled assessment as examining bodies lower the ability range of their interests, are difficult to anticipate in the annual estimates of college expenditure.

56. Several institutions comment that the move into the internal examination system through the development of BTEC and CNAA courses has brought added costs: through the time spent by teaching staff in setting papers and making scripts, the cost of stationery and printing, and the administrative costs of arranging numerous assessment and appeals boards. To these must be added the cost of external examiners, where frequently an attempt to standardise fees is to some extent counterbalanced by higher expenses, when (partly as a result of the CNAA's reaction to the Lindop Report*) a more rigorous attitude is being taken to the approval of proposed examiners. One result of this is that colleges often have to look further afield for appropriate specialists.

57. The cost in staff time in the move to BTEC courses was clearly not fully anticipated, especially the effect of introducing phase tests, project work and course assessment. In more than one college, while the educational advantages were lauded, the difficulties of finding time to do the necessary development work, together with the actual demands of the assessment system, were real. Against this the external system seemed relatively undemanding and simple to operate, and some staff were continuing to choose this.

58. Whether a college was more involved in the internal or the external system, they all commented on the extent to which new methods of assessment themselves, as well as the introduction of new examinations for new types of students, has put up the cost of assessment. Continuous assessment, though it reduces the need for formal examinations and all that they cost, is expensive in academic staff time. Project work imposes special demands on external examiners which have to be reflected in their fees. The growth of Mode 3 type examinations also places a costly burden on staff time.

59. When new modes of delivery such as distance learning and open learning systems become more widespread, where both teaching and assessment is much more individual and the distinction between them is easily blurred, it is anticipated that costs will again increase. With the

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* *Academic Validation in Public Sector Higher Education: The Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Academic Validation of Degree Courses in the Public Sector of Higher Education* (Cmnd 9501), HMSO, 1985.

introduction of new courses, such as CPVE and GCSE, and the adoption of new methods such as 'profiling', the costs, as yet unknown, are again likely to increase the burden to be borne by the colleges. The expansion of mid-career courses places a premium on student self-assessment, with once again a high cost in staff time; this could become a very expensive item in the total assessment bill.

60. College reaction to the changes brought about in the assessment system has resulted in a review by some of the way in which they monitor or control the cost of assessing. For example, the expansion of the internal system of examining often means a transfer of expenditure from the centre to the faculties and departments; in response to which at least one institution is now trying to reintroduce more centralised control in order to standardise and reduce costs. Semester-based and modular courses do not comply with a uniform academic year, and the expansion of the examination period has also extended the academic year. Both have consequences for staffing, and costs increase accordingly.

61. Finally, a picture emerges from the colleges' observations of an expanding system of great flexibility and complexity, but with elements of duplication and very little co-ordination and rationalisation. The development of individual 'programmes' rather than uniform courses, with all that this entails for transfer and interchange between them, has added to this complexity, with inevitable consequences for academic staff costs and high administrative involvement. Several institutions comment on the difficulties that flow from the complexity of the system alone, not least the difficulty of advising students and of assessing the fees that they should be charged.

Suggestions for Improvement Made by the Colleges

62. A number of suggestions were made by the colleges which they believe could both reduce the cost involved and improve the operation of the assessment systems adopted. Perhaps the most common suggestion was the need for greater computerisation of student records and results by the institutions and the examining bodies. Whereas some are already embarking on this, the systems being used are not always compatible with each other and there would clearly be advantages if they were. Preparation of a generic computer software package for student records would also be helpful.

63. Such innovation implies much greater co-ordination and rationalisation than presently exists and the need for this was stressed by several colleges. Reference was made to it particularly in relation to GCE and other 16+ examinations where it was hoped that colleges might

avoid dealing with a number of different boards, and also reduce the number of different examination centres. One institution went so far as to question whether GCE examinations should be taken in FE at all.

64. Another college proposal was that there might be some restriction on the incidence of examinations in order to halt the steady extension of the examination period throughout the year. This could also include more co-ordination of entry closing dates and tighter arrangements for resits.

65. Two other suggestions for improvements related specifically to the colleges themselves. The first proposed a much closer scrutiny of the costs involved when an assessment scheme was proposed for CNAA or BTEC approval, the second concerned the advice given to students over the examinations they should take. It was suggested, for example, that students should be permitted to take only those examinations which were essential for the courses of study they were following, and that there should be much closer scrutiny by academic staff of the examination entries that their students were making. This would require a greater understanding and involvement of academic staff in the whole range of assessment opportunities available to their students and a willingness and ability to undertake more directed student counselling at an early stage. The preparation of an 'examinations handbook' for staff was seen by one college as a step towards improved communications over assessment within the institution.

Commentary on the Institutions' Contribution

66. Perhaps the most interesting outcome of the survey has been the extent to which it has stimulated an awareness of, and concern for, an area of college expenditure which had previously largely been ignored or taken for granted. Most colleges expressed surprise when the amount they were spending on assessment was identified, even though some were already taking steps to try to bring it under greater control. It is the extent to which the institution has such little control, relatively, over this expenditure that gives greatest cause for concern.

67. By far the most significant of these growing costs is that of staff time, whether of academic, administrative or clerical staff. Most of this is unaccountable in precise terms and much is absorbed with other duties, but there seems little doubt that it is an increasing cost. This inevitably raises the interesting philosphical question of the extent to which assessment is, or should be, defined as a necessary and integral part of learning. How much should assessment be defined as teaching? It may well be that the time has come to reappraise the relationships between learning, teaching and assessment, and to resist the external

pressures placed on students to produce a 'bit of paper'. Or, conversely, to recognise more openly that assessment is an integral part of learning, and that its costs should be more firmly related to the provision of learning.

68. Finally, the survey, as far as the institutions are concerned, seems to have thrown up yet again the need for improved and more informed communication. More detailed knowledge of all types of assessment on the part of academic staff would lead to better student counselling and perhaps to more efficiently run assessment and appeals boards, with less dependence on non-teaching staff. More information about the administration of assessment might reduce the need for late entries and ad hoc arrangements. Better communication between examining bodies, and between them and the institutions, could perhaps lead to a simpler, co-ordinated and possibly more educationally desirable system of assessment for the students. On the other hand, many will see the college suggestions for improvement as an increased restriction on the freedom of the learner-clients to be examined in what they wish, and when it suits them.

SECTION V

COSTS — THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES' VIEW

Areas of Involvement

69. Each local authority included in the survey was responsible for a range of FE and HE institutions, although two of them did not include a polytechnic. There appeared to be three different areas in which an LEA is concerned with assessment costs and each of those questioned was involved in them all. These are: awards to students and the remission of fees; funding of colleges and the approval of estimates; and the establishing of authority-wide policies and procedures on specific aspects of assessment. National guidelines or agreements exist, but all allow LEAs considerable discretion.

Student Awards and Fees Remission

70. All authorities pay the nationally-proposed mandatory awards for students, including the payment of examination fees where they are an essential part of the course for which the award is given. There are, however, significant differences between authorities over the payment of discretionary awards and over the remission of fees for different categories of students.

71. For example, whereas most LEAs exercise discretion over the course for which an award is made, once that has been determined all the normal costs involved, including examination fees, are met by the LEA. In some, however, the LEA also exercises discretion over the costs included in the award and in fewer LEAs this is restricted to tuition fees only. There is a wide variety too in the discretion exercised over the types of students for whom awards are made: part-time students receiving very little help and the aid given to mature students varying considerably over the country. One LEA was unable to make any awards at all to mature students although most gave some, albeit nominal, help to older and disadvantaged students.

72. Most authorities permit 16- to 18-year-old students to study in FE colleges free of cost, while for some, though perhaps only for particular examinations, the age is raised to 19. In most cases this means that these

students do not have to pay examination fees, but such is not always the case. Some authorities, though not many, remit the fees of students over this age, others remit fees of those who are unemployed or on social security and/or give concessions to those who are retired. Where these students take formal, approved examinations then the deficit on the college's budget is made up by the LEA. None of them saw any need to question this practice nor to doubt that it would continue.

73. In one LEA an average of only 75% of the colleges' approved expenditure under the head of examinations was met by the examination fees paid from student awards or by students themselves, the deficit being made up from rate-borne expenditure. In another, which did not normally give awards to students over the age of 21, consideration was now being given to doing so in order to encourage those adults in employment who wished to change direction, or those who were returning to employment after a break away from it. Most part-time students have to pay their own fees unless they can persuade their employers to pay them, or are following an approved MSC-funded training scheme.

Funding of Colleges and Approval of Estimates

74. Although most college estimates carry a budget head for examinations, this mostly covers only the income and expenditure fees for external bodies. Any deficit is budgeted for by the LEA on an incremental basis, with the rate of inflation apparently being the sole justification for change. Thus any significant change in the numbers of students receiving remission of fees or concessionary rates was rarely acknowledged in the direct provision made by the authority under this head. The college was expected to meet such imbalance by virement from other heads of expenditure, or presumably by increased net income.

75. LEAs were not concerned about such individual examination expenditure as postage, printing, etc. but they did have control over staff posts and would not lightly expand a college's establishment even if it could be shown that assessment justified further expenditure on staff. There was perhaps rather less control over the use of part-time hours and the extra demands made on staff by assessment were frequently met from this allocation.

76. Most authorities saw assessment as a necessary component of an institution's operating costs, to which students' fees generally would be applied, and not a subject for separate accounting. The costs of assessment were thus absorbed within the estimates and subject to the same budget constraints as other heads of expenditure.

Authority Policies on Fees and Practices

77. Most authorities, having regard to national agreements, expressed a view (even if they did not have a firm policy) on such matters as the imposing of a local examinations fee by individual colleges, the remission of staff contact hours for assessment duties, the payment of 'resit' or duplicate examination fees, and the scale of payments made for invigilation or to external examiners. In some cases they agreed the sums to be levied or paid and these rates were applied by all the colleges in their control. At least one LEA, however, effected a policy of maximum flexibility and left many of these matters to its individual colleges.

Comments and Suggestions for Improvement Made by the Authorities

78. Few LEAs expressed any great concern about their ability to continue to bear from rate-supported income their present policy on awards and fees. They were, however, anxious that their involvement in assessment as such should not be further extended. Several expressed concern at the increasing number of enquiries they received about financial help for mature students for whom, presently, little support was available.

79. Another comment made by more than one LEA was the extent to which increased involvement in continuous assessment was likely to raise costs; a fear that was surpassed only by their suspicions over the additional costs of profiling. Apprehension about the additional costs of new examinations and new methods of assessment was widespread. One authority regretted that the opportunity for some rationalisation in the system through the introduction of the GCSE seemed in danger of being lost if students were given freedom of choice.

80. Several authorities expressed concern about what they saw as an inevitable rise in costs, and, though they would have liked to have found that records of achievement and profiles would make examinations of less importance, they feared that a student's need to gain credibility in an increasingly competitive world would thwart this aim. It was generally considered that the way the 'examinations industry' operated and the increasing number of students going through the system meant that costs would inevitably rise.

Commentary on the LEAs' Contribution

81. It was interesting to note that, whereas most of the authorities questioned initially felt that their involvement with assessment was

marginal, their apparent concern seemed to be related primarily to the formal mechanisms of fees and awards. While accepting the need to reappraise certain aspects of these — for example, criteria for the award of discretionary grants, or changes in the age of grant-eligible groups — they nonetheless implied that the system itself worked reasonably well and was not capable of, nor in need of, radical review, at least as far as the payment of examination fees was concerned. They were aware that continued pressure on public spending finance gave them progressively less freedom to manoeuvre.

82. When, however, they considered the nature of assessment itself, most of them expressed some concern about the increasing number of examinations, the pressure on students to take them and the rise in costs which they felt was inevitable. This was, it appeared to them, a matter for the colleges, within LEA policies for establishing and controlling college budgets. It was up to the colleges to find the means of financing their decisions. Their suggestions in this respect — for rationalisation, simplification and economy — are similar to those of the colleges. Again, such measures might be seen by some to restrict the autonomy of the learner-client.

83. Finally, most authorities recognised that they each followed different practices in the award of discretionary grants and payment of fees which could, sadly, discriminate against students living in particular geographical areas. Such discrimination, whilst regretted, was nonetheless accepted as inevitable and more desirable than any lessening of LEA freedom. The authorities' reluctance to change that which was in their control suggests that, no matter how much they might feel individually that it was desirable, they would be even more reluctant to become involved in the assessment process in order to bring about the measures of rationalisation, simplification and economy which many of them see as necessary.

SECTION VI

SUMMARY

General Conclusions

84. This survey has covered only a small number of institutions and authorities, and it gives no more than a snapshot. Nevertheless, there is such a measure of unanimity of view on certain aspects of assessment that there seems some justification in drawing certain general conclusions.

These appear to be:

1. The number of students undertaking some form of assessment has not declined as rapidly or as much as the fall in the birth rate would have suggested.
2. Generally, an increasing number of students are being subjected to, or are seeking, some form of assessment — be it skills tests, continuous assessment, records of achievement or profiles.
3. There is a wider range of examinations and assessments available to students and that range is likely to be further extended with the introduction of new examinations and methods of assessment, without a comparable decline in the older examinations.
4. Examining bodies are willing to fill any gap in a student's education and training with some recognised certificate of achievement.
5. The system of assessment in further and higher education is complex, competitive, uncoordinated and expensive.
6. Colleges are finding it increasingly difficult to advise students, and to match the available assessment opportunities to their particular needs.
7. The variety of assessments and examining bodies with which a single institution is concerned itself imposes an increasing burden on academic and administrative staff.
8. New assessment methods are more costly in staff time.
9. The costs of assessment are either identifiable (examination fees, payments to examiners etc.) or absorbed (postage, stationery, printing and materials) or hidden (visits, hospitality, and staff time). Each category is increasing.
10. Various fee concessions made to certain categories of students by different authorities not only increase the costs that the colleges themselves have to bear, but add to the administrative complexity of the system.

11. The grants that students receive and the fees concessions that are made to them vary considerably and often depend as much on where they live as their individual need.
12. The costs of assessment appear to be rising more than the rate of inflation and are often seriously underestimated by the local education authorities.

Points That Might Merit Further Investigation

85. Limited though the survey has been, it does throw up a number of areas which might benefit from more detailed investigation. These include:

1. The factors determining the examination fees charged (why, for example, does the cost of a three-hour unseen written examination vary so much?).
2. The rationale for costing assessment (should it be defined and costed as an integral part of learning?).
3. Ways of reducing costs (to whose benefits?).
4. Methods of meeting the costs (how should they be accounted for?).
5. Who should pay — the student, the employer or the rate-payer?
6. The views of the employer and learner on assessment (are they getting what they want from the examination system?).

APPENDIX

FURTHER EDUCATION UNIT

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PROJECT INFORMATION BULLETIN

Title: THE COST OF ASSESSING (RP305)

Starting Date: May 1985

Completion Date: November 1985

Aims of Project: To obtain information about the cost of examining and other forms of assessment in Further and Higher Education and to analyse these costs in relation to:

i) the cost to candidates;
ii) the cost to colleges/polytechnics;
iii) the cost to local education authorities.

Background: Almost all students following courses of study at institutions of Further and Higher Education are assessed in some way or other. This may be internal assessment undertaken by the institution itself either for its own awards, or on behalf of an external course-validating and award-giving body (eg the CNAA and BTEC) or it may be through external assessment undertaken by the award-giving bodies themselves, (eg CGLI, RSA etc).

Students are assessed in order to monitor their progress and record their achievement. Assessment may take place at specified intervals or stages during the course, but this almost invariably includes some form of final assessment. Assessment takes many forms, generally determined by the nature of the course and the subjects studied. It can include any one, or combination, of the following assessment methods:

Continuous assessment (course work); Field work; Seen and unseen written examinations; Dissertations; Project work: individual and group; Objective tests; Viva-voce or interview ; Preparation of log books; Exhibitions and portfolios; Practical work.

The recording of these assessments can vary from a short coded slip of paper to a detailed profile. The cost of assessment varies, firstly according to the course followed and, as a consequence of its purpose and design, the methods used and the resources (staff time, materials, equipment and accommodation) required. It also varies across assessments for an external examining body, where usually individual fees are charged to each student per subject, unit, module, stage or level. Some of the assessment costs are absorbed into the validation fee charged to the institution and/or into the registration fee paid by the individual student. Variety also exists in the use that is made, in both internal and external assessment, of external supervisors, moderators and/or examiners and in the fees that are paid to them, either by the institution or the external examining body.

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These costs of assessment and certification are borne in different ways. In some cases each student is charged a different fee for each stage of assessment undertaken and, depending on the course and the personal circumstances of the student, this cost may ultimately be borne by the local education authority from whom that student receives a grant. Validating body registration fees can be met in the same way: through a local authority grant. Other costs, such as those of course validation and payments to external examiners or moderators, may be regarded as institutional costs and borne by the college or polytechnic, and ultimately reflected in their estimates.

The cost of assessing in further and higher education is therefore a complex and wide-ranging issue. It involves the variation in costs charged; the factors that determine what they shall be; the various means by which those costs are allocated; and by whom they are met.

Method: The project will comprise:

i) a survey and analysis of the information on fees and assessment published by the main examining/validating bodies in further and higher education;

ii) an analysis of similar data provided by a sample of FHE institutions and local education authorities;

iii) interviews with a representative sample of examining and professional bodies, institutions and local education authorities.

Approximately 12 FHE institutions and 6 education authorities will be visited. Information will be sought from such bodies as: CGLI; CNAA; BTEC; RSA; AEB; NNEB, and such professional examining bodies as the Engineering Council, the Institute of Bankers, and the professional bodies for the building trades and the hotel and catering industry. The costs of external examiners/moderators, and the costs of printing and preparing certificates/diplomas will be included.

Outcomes: A report suitable for consideration for dissemination by FEU.

Project Director: Jean F Rosmiter (Former Assistant Director, North East London Polytechnic)

FEU Contact: Jack Mansell

The Further Education Unit was established as a focal point for further education curricular matters and as a centre which would make possible a more co-ordinated approach to FE curriculum development. It aims to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom by:

a) reviewing and evaluating the range of existing curricula and programmes;

b) determining priorities and recommending improvements;

c) carrying out curriculum studies, development and evaluation;

d) disseminating FE curriculum information.

(JFR/JWM/June 1985)

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Objectives

The objects for which **The Further Education Unit (FEU)** is established are to promote, encourage and develop the efficient provision of further education in the United Kingdom and for that purpose:
a) to review and evaluate the range of existing further education curricula and programmes and to identify overlap, duplication, deficiencies and inconsistencies therein;
b) to determine priorities for action to improve the provision of further education and to make recommendations as to how such improvements can be effected;
c) to carry out studies in further education and to support investigations of and experimentation in, and the development of further education curricula and to contribute to and assist in the evaluation of initiatives in further education;
d) to disseminate and publish information and to assist in the dissemination and publication of information about recommendations for and experiments and developments in further education.

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